

LABOR REPORT: HOW TO STOP THE REVOLVING



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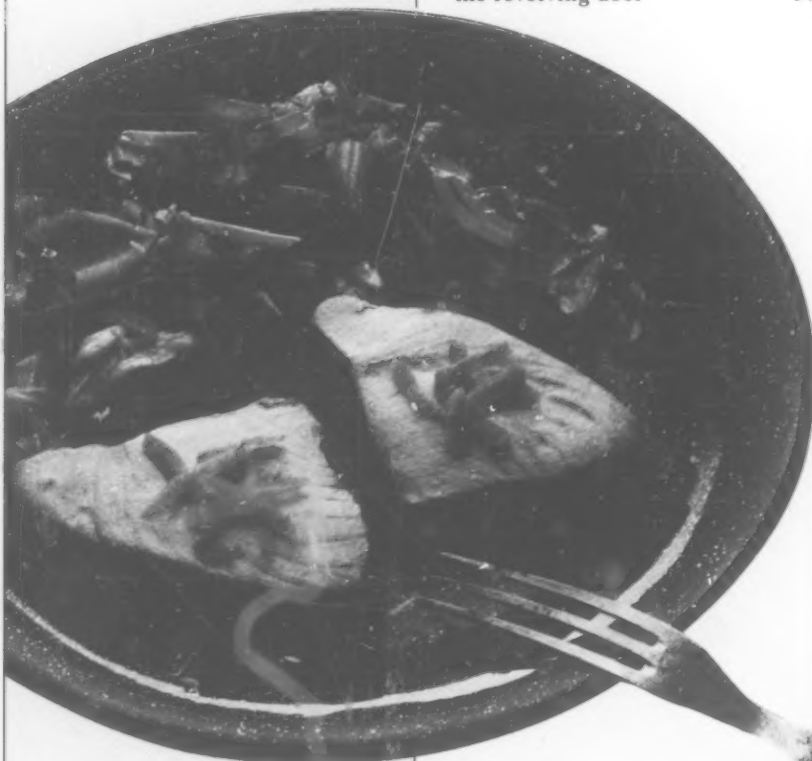
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■ OPERATOR OUTLOOK

Trust, Tests and 'The Box'

To tell the truth, operators are split on the use of polygraph tests.

Judging from recent congressional moves, an employer's right to give polygraph tests to job applicants is virtually doomed, and his power to use the machine to investigate thefts might also be in jeopardy.

A bill introduced in December by Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., would ban the use of polygraphs for pre-employment screening in private industry. A House measure passed in November is even broader: It would ban "specific incident" testing—for example, to investigate the workplace thefts that cost American industry \$40 billion a year.

Few large foodservice

companies still use the polygraph for pre-employment screening: Many, such as McDonald's, Burger King and Pizza Hut, say they never have. Most of those that did use polygraph testing gave it up for stringent reference or credit checks, or for some form of written "honesty attitude" test.

But many operators are siding with the National Restaurant Association to defend the investigative polygraph. "We think it's a useful tool for the industry," says Michael Click, spokesman for Southland Corp., which owns 7-Eleven. "If there are problems with how the tests are administered,



Whom do you trust?

Congress can address those concerns without prohibiting them."

"It's a wonderful catalyst for clearing the air in an investigation," says Paul Mitchell, vice president for corporate affairs with Carl Karcher Enterprises. The company brings in outside polygraph experts as needed for specific inquiries. Mitchell says the threat of a ban is "just another example of the government's ignorance of business."

The broader House bill would allow pre-employment screening for such jobs as airport security guards, nuclear plant workers and some drug company employees. Federal, state and local governments are also exempt from the ban.

"It's crazy," says John Hawes, human resources vice president at Gilbert/Robinson. He oversees employees at nearly 120 restaurants, including Houlihan's, the Fedora Cafe, and Darryl's. "The government is tying our hands on these investigations."

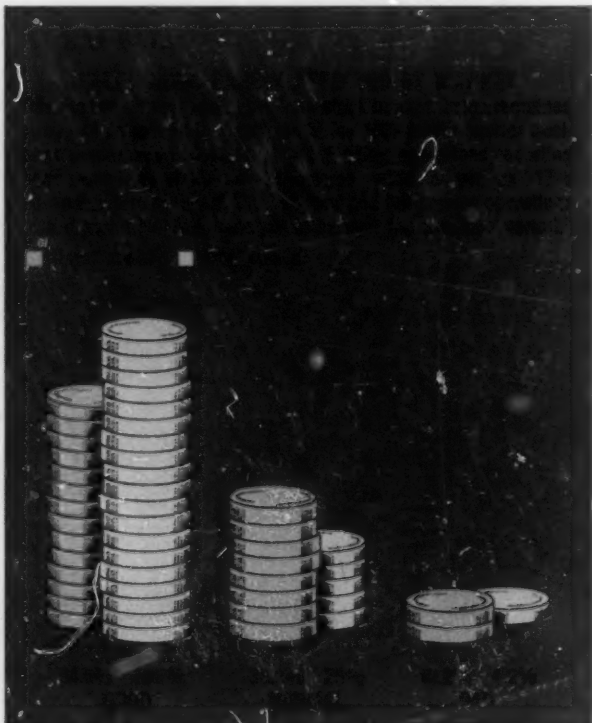
Carl Karcher's Mitchell puts it even more succinctly: "That's just playing the same game with two cues."

—Brian Quinton

Do you always tell the truth? Do you think policemen are basically honest? Would you put money in a vending machine that mistakenly gave you free gum? Such simple questions are being answered by the many job applicants and current employees who take written "honesty attitude" tests. The answers may seem easy to fake, but, in fact, by asking them many



times in many forms, the tests seem able to profile a respondent's honesty. Steven Schwittalla, senior vice president at Circle K Corp., says the tests "convey a more positive attitude to employees and, in many cases, yield more definitive information than a polygraph."



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NOTE

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